

THE WEST ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

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UNFULFILLED PLANS LEAVE NEW PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
ISOLATED IN THE LAS VEGAS DESERT

ACCIDENTAL OASIS



STEVE HALL/REDUXBLESSING

The \$470 million Smith Center for the Performing Arts currently stands as a lonely building on the outskirts of Las Vegas. Opened to the public on March 10 in the middle of 61 acres of undeveloped land, the

complex rests on the site of an abandoned rail yard a few blocks west of Downtown Las Vegas and was intended as the centerpiece of former mayor Oscar Goodman's scheme to build a new civic **continued on page 8**

VISITOR'S CENTER OPENS AT A RENEWED PALM SPRINGS ICON

CHALLENGING MODERNISM



COURTESY THE ANNENBERG RETREAT AT SUNNYLANDS

Sunnylands, the 200-acre estate outside Palm Springs commissioned by Ambassador and Mrs. Walter Annenberg and completed in 1966 by A. Quincy Jones, opened to the public on March 1. The restored house and

new visitor's center, both by Frederick Fisher and Partners, will serve primarily as a high-level retreat. (Think modernist Camp David in the California desert, plus private golf course.) Fisher's **continued on page 4**



COURTESY AMERICA'S CUP

SF SCALES DOWN AMERICA'S CUP
AMBITIONS FOR PIERS

Trimming Sails

In a surprising turn of events, the America's Cup Event Authority (ACEA) early this month announced a "consolidated venue plan" that significantly diminishes the development footprint of the San Francisco-based event. No longer part of the complex real estate deal are Piers 30 and 32 and the prime real estate bounded by Beale, Bryant, and **continued on page 3**

DOWNTOWN DOUBLETAKE
THE CONVERSION OF RUNDOWN
PROPERTIES INTO HIP
RESTAURANTS AND RETAIL IS AT
A TIPPING POINT IN DOWNTOWN
LOS ANGELES. SEE PAGES 11-13

CONTENTS

03
PEER REVIEW
IN PERIL

06
CRIT: FOLONIS
AT UCLA

10
PRODUCT:
WOODS WORK

04 EAVESDROP
16 CALENDAR
20 MARKETPLACE



Craig Ellwood's existing Art Center Hillside Campus.

MALTZAN TO DESIGN ART CENTER
EXPANSION IN PASADENA

NEW LEAF

Still basking in the glow of its recent pier win in St. Petersburg, Florida, Michael Maltzan Architecture has won yet another commission: to renovate Art Center College of Design's hillside campus in Pasadena, oversee a master plan for the entire institution, and refurbish a former post office building on the school's south campus.

Maltzan bested other firms on the shortlist including Behnisch Architekten, Barton Myers Associates, and Krueck+Sexton.

"I won't be bored," said Maltzan, referring to a wealth of new **continued on page 8**



A TALK WITH PRITZKER WINNER
WANG SHU. SEE PAGE 16

LANG SHU/LONG



borders by hella jongerius

maharam

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A TEACHING MOMENT

You know something is a worthwhile topic when every time you bring it up people grab on and start talking as if they'd been waiting forever for you to ask them. Of all the subjects I've brought up lately, the one that elicits this response most often is the divide between architectural education and architectural practice.

The more I have these conversations and the more I attend architecture reviews and lectures, read interviews with architects, and peruse educational journals the more I understand that architectural education has moved further and further away from the realities of actually working in architecture.

Bluntly, architects coming out of school are not well enough prepared to practice architecture. Certainly schools have become incredibly sophisticated laboratories for theoretical and technical discourse. Students I've encountered develop a firm grasp on design strategies—addressing program, site, form, massing, environment, urban scale and other essential issues—and are more adept with technology than any generation before. But those skills are not sufficient to getting architects ready for the issues, challenges and constraints of the real world.

Among students, familiarity with the building process outside of computer modeling is rare; familiarity with commercial and client issues is rarer still; learning about running a business is almost nonexistent; and history and even the basics of architectural terminology and building skills are less and less integrated into curricula.

I have witnessed many critiques where discussion of the client, of budget, of material restraints and of any limitation whatsoever is brushed off. Schools argue that limitations are for the real world, but that's exactly the point. Students need to at least have some familiarity with this reality. These are not things that can be left to two years of apprenticeship in an office cramming for licensing exams. Even small doses in school will give them much better facility with these issues when they're making designs of their own.

Another problem is the lack of focus on careers once students get out. IDP (Intern Development Program), an intern requirement of NCARB is usually considered a joke. So are career placement programs, which in many schools are almost non-existent. Students often wind up taking free internships with their professors, hardly a sound career placement path. Most students consider business training (teaching valuable expertise in starting a company and in navigating the rough waters of the trade and of the development process) in their schools a joke as well. Funny since all architecture offices are, in fact, businesses. Imagine this being the case at law schools or medical schools?

Of course architecture programs shouldn't become trade schools, and students need to dream, theorize and have freedom. That goes without saying, and it's one of the strengths of our architectural education. But that freedom needs to be balanced with constraint and real world expertise that will help future architects invaluablely down the line. And of course it's easy to complain about the shortcomings of architectural education, but it's a lot harder to decide how to fit all these necessary pieces into the mix. The question is how can we integrate all of these essential elements into the existing framework, and where can that framework be better balanced.

The Architect's Newspaper, UCLA and the A+D Museum will soon host a forum on this topic to be held at the A+D Museum in Los Angeles. I encourage you to weigh in on that topic prior to the event by sending us a letter or email.

Without a smoother transition to practice academia will become a revolving door in which students are trained only to become teachers or perhaps frustrated visionaries and not to practice successfully on their own. Sounds like graduates in poetry or philosophy. But this is not poetry. This is architecture. Let's keep it that way. **SAM LUBELL**

GSA MAY LIMIT PEER REVIEW IN DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

Peer Pressure

Since the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), which oversees the federal government's multibillion dollar building program, launched its Design Excellence program in 1994, the quality of new federal buildings has improved significantly.

Of course Design Excellence is not perfect, but it stresses creative proposals and talented architects and streamlines architect and engineer hiring. Perhaps the most vital part of the initiative, peer review—in which a list of top architects from across the country help advise on and even help select architects—has been put into doubt by new federal guidelines.

Currently private sector architects, or "peers," make up one of five voting members on technical evaluation panels that help select architects for Design Excellence projects. During design and construction review, three-person architecture peer panels provide design critiques.

Last October the Office of Federal Procurement Policy issued *Policy Letter 11-01*, addressing the issue of ending guidance of "the performance of inherently governmental and critical functions." The letter stresses a determination on "when governmental outsourcing of services is, and is not, appropriate." Such outsourcing could include consultants, private contractors, or, in the case of Design Excellence, private sector professionals.

So GSA is examining whether peer voting for architecture projects selection is "in keeping with the regulations and the policy," said Frank Giblin, who works in the office of GSA's chief architect. The decision would not affect design/build projects, nor would it impact the peer panels that provide design critiques during projects (these architects only play an advisory role).

The agency's goal, said Giblin in mid-March, "would be to have things clarified before it becomes an issue on the next selection of an architectural firm—about six weeks from now. The result, he said, could mean that "current architecture/engineering procurement processes are unaffected." Of course the decision could also mean the end of a vital component of peer review, which the AIA, for one, sees as a huge mistake.

In an email to *AN*, Andrew Goldberg, AIA's managing director of government relations, wrote, "Peer review is a central component of GSA's Design Excellence program. It ensures that federal facilities are designed and built to the highest standards, safeguarding the taxpayers' investment in government facilities. At a time when federal policymakers are striving to lower energy costs, make federal buildings safer and more accessible, and represent the best in American design, it would make no sense to eliminate or scale back the [peer review] program."

Giblin himself doesn't disagree. "The peers," he said, "have helped to raise the bar on the quality of federal design." But that doesn't guarantee they'll remain part of the process. Now it's a waiting game to see what verdict the bureaucracy delivers.

SL

TRIMMING SAILS continued from front page
the Embarcadero. The ACEA, a private organization that stages the event, would not comment directly on the move, but speculation centered on their concerns about attendance and finances for the project.

The announcement came on the eve of a crucial vote by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. While the vote was expected to narrowly pass, the America's Cup, like most development projects in San Francisco, faced strong opposition. Just prior to the venue change, a citizen's group, Waterfront Watch, led by former supervisor and anti-development activist Aaron Peskin, filed a lawsuit charging that "numerous procedural and substantive violations" of the California

Environmental Quality Act existed in the proposed deal.

Piers 27, 29, and 80 are still a part of the agreement, which is now being restructured by the event authority and the city of San Francisco. Exact redevelopment plans for these piers—which are being master planned and designed by a team led by AECOM—are still unclear; a new scheme was, at press time, expected in three to four weeks.

The America's Cup was anticipated to make a major impact on the San Francisco waterfront, which, of course, contains some of the most desirable real estate in the country. Many of the decades-old piers are in serious disrepair and will likely not survive a major earthquake. The agreement with

America's Cup organizers included seismic upgrading of the affected piers in return for long-term development rights. That agreement also contained provisions for financial guarantees by the city if attendance was lower than projected. The financial risk to the city and the development deal led some elected officials to question the prudence of the arrangement as proposed. Proponents of the plan stressed that the likelihood of any future developer making the necessary infrastructure investment was slim.

America's Cup backers insist that the race will still occur in San Francisco. What is now unclear is whether a positive contribution to San Francisco's urban waterfront will result.

GEORGE CALYS

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MARCH 28, 2012

OPEN > RESTAURANT



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Designer: Freeland Buck

COURTESY FREELAND BUCK

As gentrification continues to move into LA's working-class neighborhoods, next up appears to be Highland Park, full of vintage houses and located just east of Downtown. And the de facto architect of the area is Freeland Buck, which has designed several spaces on York Boulevard, the neighborhood's main drag. The firm's most recent creation is Maximiliano, an Italian restaurant located in an intimate 2,200-square-foot wedge-shaped building that the firm has infused with carefully calibrated shifts and repetitions of color, texture, and a heavy dose of computer-based fabrication. Upon entering, visitors are greeted with a bang: a large red mural on the south wall is incised with a continuous rhythm of back-lit stripes created by CNC milling. Evoking spaghetti strands, lines shift from evenly parallel at the ceiling to randomly wavy at the seats, starting to "blur or pulse a bit visually," as firm principal Brennan Buck put it. Back-lit neon-green mill-cut slats below the ceiling animate the space with varying intensity of color, evoking the Op Art style of artists like Carlos Cruz-Diez, while a deep soffit undulates over the bar, both filtering natural and artificial light and housing the restaurant's wine collection. **SL**

EAVESDROP > THE EDITORS

NO FLIGHT ZONE?

Fentress Architects' ambitious design for the new Bradley West satellite terminal at LAX recalls ocean waves or maybe even airplane wings. But rather than just sticking to design and schematics, we hear the firm is trying to bite off more than it can chew with construction documents. In this economy, who can blame them for trying to do more work, but sources say that the client and HNTB—the firm hired to do the construction heavy lifting—think it's a stretch.

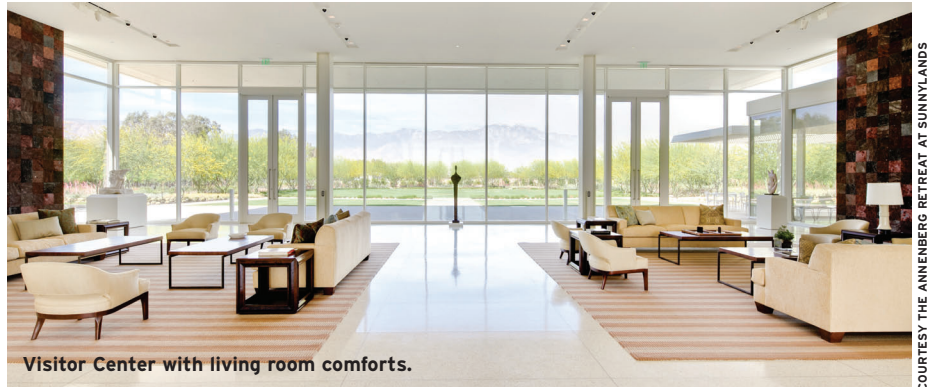
CLICKS BEAT BRICKS

Publisher and bookseller **William Stout** opened up a gem of an architectural bookstore three years ago on Mission Street in San Francisco's SOMA neighborhood. But Stout has officially closed up shop. According to our sources, the lease had come up, and flagging in-store sales didn't justify keeping the space. No surprise—apparently much of Stout's business is transacted online.

A LESS CROWDED POPULOUS

Stadium design specialists **Populous** made a splash in 2010 when they took on stadium guru **Dan Meis**, who became a senior principal at the firm. Now it appears that after just two years Meis is leaving to again re-start his firm, Meis Architects. No confirmation from either party, but we're confident the gossip mill has this right.

SEND CAPTAIN'S WINGS AND TAILGATING INVITES TO EAVESDROP@ARCHPAPER.COM



Visitor Center with living room comforts.

COURTESY THE ANNENBERG RETREAT AT SUNNYSLANDS

CHALLENGING MODERNISM continued from front page addition actually fulfills the spirit of modernism better than the original house.

Architect A. Quincy Jones, the original Sunnyslands architect, best known for his Eichler tract homes, was not doctrinaire in his aesthetic approach, nor obsessed with the ways of concrete or steel. He was, however, keenly interested in crafting joyful spaces using innovative materials, if it served the user and the client. A seminal project for Jones was the 1949 Brody house in Holmby Hills. The Brodys' decorator, Billy Haines, suggested Jones to the Annenbergs for a new home in Rancho Mirage, about 20 minutes southeast of Palm Springs. Responding to the Annenbergs' interest in Mayan forms, Jones' final design features a pyramidal form over the main living area. The skylight on top illuminates a Rodin sculpture placed on a rotating base set in a fountain surrounded by bromeliads. The kitchen, dressing rooms, offices, and master bedroom extend outward from this arrangement.

The 20,000-square-foot house, with only one bedroom for the owners, focuses on the universal space for a very high-powered couple. (Most famously, this area was transformed for New Year's Eve galas, which President and Mrs. Reagan and other luminaries attended.) There are long, lava-stone walls, an unusual background for a staggering collection of impressionist and postimpressionist paintings. But even Jones' bold moves were challenged by Mrs. Annenberg's color, furniture, and decorative preferences. When Mrs. Annenberg saw Jones' red steel columns with punched holes holding up the concrete roof, she had the vertical members painted celadon and the holes plugged with wood dowels.

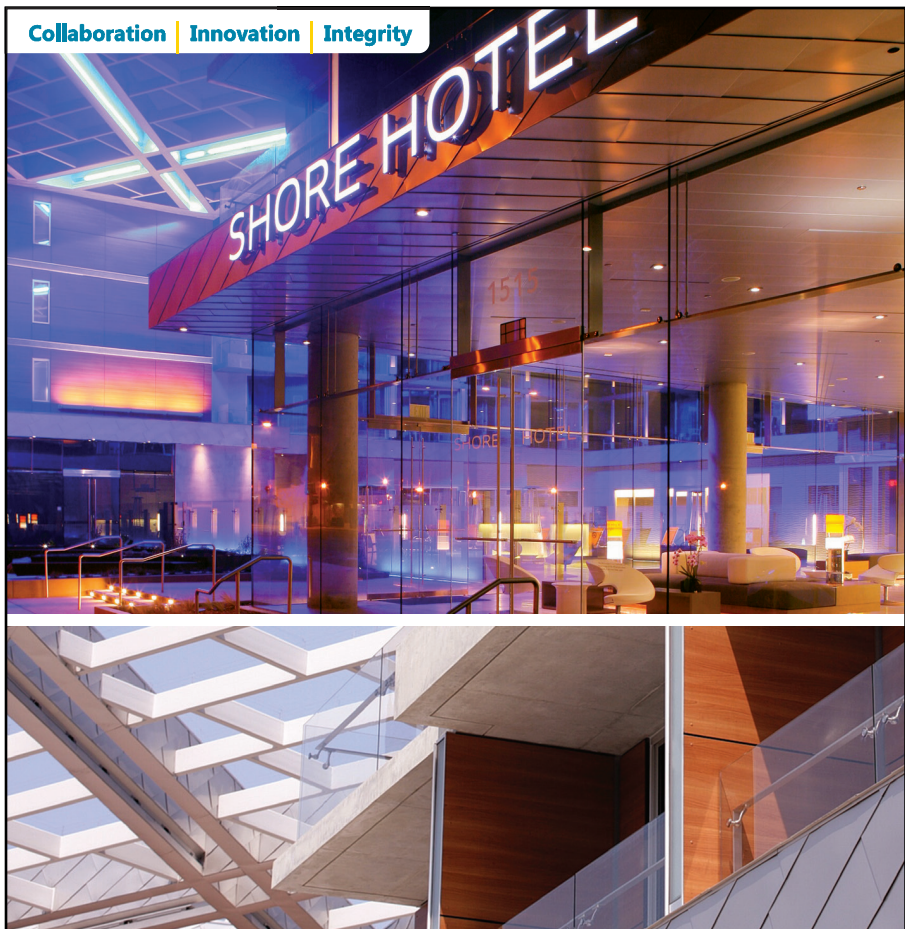
Decorators Billy Haines and Ted Graber (later the Reagan White House decorator) developed the style, which combined English, Chinese, and other influences.

The floor in the main area is mostly pink marble. Much of the home's exterior is also pink, inspired by Mrs. Annenberg's love of the pale desert light. This is Hearst Castle for the jet set. Thanks to the design team's skill, the simple forms and grand décor reach a kind of détente. This was one of the advantages of Jones's modernism. It could almost handle extreme Hollywood Regency.

Fisher, who has worked repeatedly for the Annenberg family, clearly understands the Jones oeuvre. At the visitor's center he accomplished what Jones could not at the main house: a humble, light-filled structure with a strong roof that focuses on the landscape. In this desert climate, it is important not only to see the distant mountains but also to feel sheltered from the heat.

The off-white center houses meeting, exhibit, educational, café, and retail spaces. As at the main house, many of these spaces are flexible. Visitors can always see daylight and follow the path to the garden. The famous lava stone, cut in slightly larger dimensions, covers the two walls in the main public space. The palette, however, is more subdued. The building doesn't feel nostalgic; rather it is respectful to the Jones legacy, while being contemporary.

James Burnett's stunning new landscape design, featuring a wide range of desert plants, was inspired by Annenberg's legendary painting collection. Fisher's subtle work, meanwhile, points to the enduring power of humble modernism—something A. Quincy Jones almost accomplished 45 years ago. **KENNETH CALDWELL**



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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MARCH 28, 2012

CRIT> UCLA OUTPATIENT SURGERY AND ONCOLOGY CENTER

SURGICAL STRIKE

Clockwise: The facade of the new center faces 16th Street in Santa Monica; the suspended steel stair; break spaces and a kitchen receive natural light.

The latest addition to UCLA's aggressive off-campus healthcare expansion in Santa Monica is the UCLA Outpatient Surgery and Oncology Center: a crisp concrete block by Michael W. Folonis Architects. Humanely scaled, full of natural light, and forward-looking in every way, this exemplary facility contrasts sharply with the UCLA Santa Monica Medical Center, Robert A. M. Stern's turgid pastiche of red-brick Romanesque across 16th Street.

"It was a miracle we got this project, which is far and away the most ambitious we've done to date," said Folonis. "I asked the developer, Randy Miller, why he picked us and he said, 'I thought architects ought to be able to design all kinds of buildings.'" Miller is a third-generation contractor with

degrees in structural engineering and construction management. He set up the Naval Group to commission intelligent, architecturally distinguished buildings. LA needs more like him.

The three-story block is set back from the street behind a forecourt landscaped by Pamela Burton & Company. Two wings flank a glazed atrium, and the upper stories are cantilevered forward and shaded by horizontal baffles from the westerly sun. The atrium opens to a public terrace and serves as a heat chimney to vent hot air, while the polished concrete provides thermal mass, eliminating the need for heating or air-conditioning.

As in a theater, patients see only half the building; the "backstage" service and

mechanical areas flow easily out of the public spaces but are restricted to doctors and staff. To the left, massive vaults house two linear accelerators for the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. A self-supporting steel staircase provides direct access to the eight operating theaters, to prep and recovery areas on the second floor, and to clinics and offices on the third.

"For me, the prospect of surgery is scary," said Folonis, "so we wanted to make the place as friendly as possible for patients, doctors, and staff." Nearly all the workspaces are naturally lit (often through translucent glass to assure privacy) and the second-floor ceilings are angled to draw in light from the street facade. Folonis softened the raw concrete—board-marked at

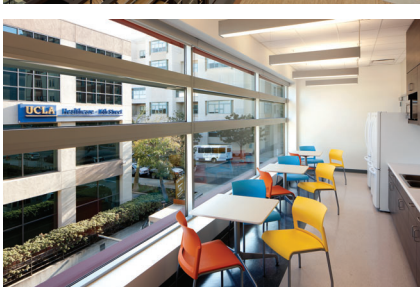
ground level, and smooth above—with bamboo wall paneling, floors, and stair treads. Color is sparingly used, and pale blue was adopted after the head nurse vetoed yellow because it would give patients a jaundiced look. Working within a tight budget, Folonis designed custom benches and economized rest room tiles in order to specify high-quality waiting-room furniture from Vitra and Herman Miller.

The 45,000-square-foot building came in at \$23 million, and UCLA installed \$22 million worth of equipment. The fully equipped garage cost two-thirds that of conventional underground parking—by halving the footprint, reducing ceiling heights, and eliminating elevators and ventilation. It is likely to be the first such facility to achieve a Gold LEED rating.

Perhaps the most innovative feature is the fully automated parking system, which Miller helped develop with two firms in Minnesota. Visitors drive down a ramp from the street and leave their cars in one of six transfer stations. Each car is scanned and then lowered by crane to one of six subterranean bays; a car can be retrieved and be ready to drive away in as little as two minutes.

The building was privately developed for lease to UCLA, quickly and at a competitive price. Its neighbor, by Stern, took the university seven years to build and overran its cost estimates. The moral? UCLA should get out of the development business and select firms with the taste and skill to do a better job.

MICHAEL WEBB



TOM BONNER

NJIT
New Jersey's Science & Technology University

Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty Position New Jersey Institute of Technology

The **New Jersey School of Architecture** at New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) seeks outstanding candidates to apply for a tenured/tenure-track assistant/associate/full professor faculty position with special emphasis on design starting in August, 2012.

The successful candidates will be outstanding in one or more of the following: architectural design pedagogy, research and scholarship. Candidates should possess a terminal degree in Architecture from an accredited program or equivalent.

She or he should be able to teach design studio and one course in any of the following areas of specialization: sustainable design, innovative construction, environmental control systems, parametric design, systems integration, or advanced design. In addition to teaching, the candidate will be expected to pursue a combination of creative work, scholarly work, or research. Other responsibilities may include participation in some administrative duties including student recruitment and service on college and university committees.

Candidates are expected to have a working knowledge and understanding of a wide range of current and emerging digital technologies and a willingness to integrate them into teaching.

The successful candidate is expected to be a well-rounded person with multiple interests and be eager to collaborate with colleagues from the related fields such as Industrial Design, Interior Design, Digital Design, and Fine Arts in the College of Architecture and Design and from other disciplines across the University.

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THE EDGE IN KNOWLEDGE



COURTESY STANTEC

UNVEILED

DJAVAD MOWAFAGHIAN CENTRE FOR BRAIN HEALTH

A new medical center at the University of British Columbia will unite doctors and medical researchers in a completely new way.

Designed by Anshen+Allen, a division of engineering and architecture firm Stantec, the five-story, 135,000-square-foot Djava Mowafaghian Centre will be divided into three regions:

the "clinic ground," the "research air," and the "synapse atrium." In simpler terms, the lower two floors will contain exam and teaching rooms for doctors, while the top two floors will contain labs for neuroscience and psychiatry researchers. Shared spaces on the middle level will include meeting rooms, offices, and a conference center. A glazed atrium etched with synaptic imagery will span the building's five levels, enhancing order and orientation throughout.

David Martin, a principal at Stantec's London office, is optimistic about combining patient care and medical research under one roof. "Healing and learning are meant to intertwine, the insights of one discipline informing the other to enhance patient care and accelerate research efficacy," he said.

ARIEL ROSENSTOCK

Architect: Stantec
Location: Vancouver, British Columbia
Completion: 2013



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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MARCH 28, 2012

ACCIDENTAL OASIS continued from front page center in the same neighborhood as City Hall and the "Fremont Street Experience" outdoor mall. But the remainder of the city's plans went bust along with the local housing market, and now the Smith Center stands as a reminder of unrealized civic aspirations.

The donors and politicians who envisioned the project challenged David M. Schwarz Architects (DMSAS) to design a building both indigenous to Las Vegas and timeless. In response to that problematic assignment (what architecture could possibly be considered indigenous to Las Vegas?), DMSAS found inspiration from the Hoover Dam, located 45 minutes east of the city. "The Hoover Dam is the most singular piece of architecture in this neighborhood," said DMSAS principal David Schwarz, adding that the Smith Center's references to the dam do not reach the level of imitation. According to Schwarz, the Smith Center is not a "series of quotes"—rather it's an homage to a rich period of Las Vegas' history. Workers building the dam in the 1930s came to Las Vegas with money to spend and impulses to satiate, quickly establishing the city as the entertainment destination it remains today.

The Smith Center's art deco styling—although a sticking point for those with modernist design sensibilities—is confidently executed by Schwarz's firm. A 170-foot carillon tower rising above the center provides a picturesque symbol of good civic intentions. In the interior, marble and terrazzo finishes surround visitors in retro luxury. The illusion of the 1930s is

never fully complete, however, given the prominent use of stucco, not stone, for exterior details.

The center includes three performance spaces in two buildings: Reynolds Hall, a 2,050-seat multi-purpose space; Boman Pavilion, which houses a 300-seat cabaret and jazz venue; and the 250-seat Troesh Studio Theater. The Smith Center's two buildings and central courtyard also offer a full program of reconfigurable spaces for banquets and community gatherings.

As Schwartz notes, the room's acoustics were a primary concern: "No one cares how it looks, but they care how it sounds," he said. The floor beneath each row of seats in the upper balcony is uniquely bulged or sloped to maintain sight lines from every seat in the room. The contours of the ceiling, manipulated to trap certain pitches while repelling others, fan out in patterns befitting the art deco motif.

The Smith Center opens with a full performance schedule including Broadway shows, the Las Vegas Philharmonic, and the Nevada Ballet Theatre. A children's museum on-site has also recently opened. But despite the project's successes, too much of the story is now told by the massive empty lots that surround it on every side—the remainder of the city's unrealized development plan. No Beaux Arts street frontages, subway portals, or pedestrian streetscapes will guide culture-seeking residents to the complex. Given the surrounding desolation, the Smith Center mostly resembles a high-water mark on the desert landscape, where the civic aspirations of Las Vegas' locals finally lost momentum. **JAMES BRASUELL**



NEW LEAF continued from front page projects coming to his Los Angeles office, including the ambitious \$50 million renovation of St. Petersburg's Pier called "The Lens," and the new Mashouf Performing Arts Center at San Francisco State University. "We feel very lucky. Now everything just needs to get moving," he added.

The renovation of Art Center's iconic 1976 glass and steel building designed by Craig Ellwood in the hills above Pasadena will include reshaping and expanding the academic structure, updating it seismically, installing new sustainable energy systems, and improving its roofing and glazing systems.

Before that work is mapped out, Maltzan will develop an "Academic Master Plan" for the campus, rethinking how the college uses its facilities to adapt to new technologies and interdisciplinary education models. Maltzan will also oversee the organization of buildings and public spaces on the hillside and the rapidly expanding South Campus in downtown Pasadena. The first step, said Maltzan, is to "spend a lot of time with the Art Center community: students, faculty, administration, and

alumni. The information we get from that will be a big part of how we move forward."

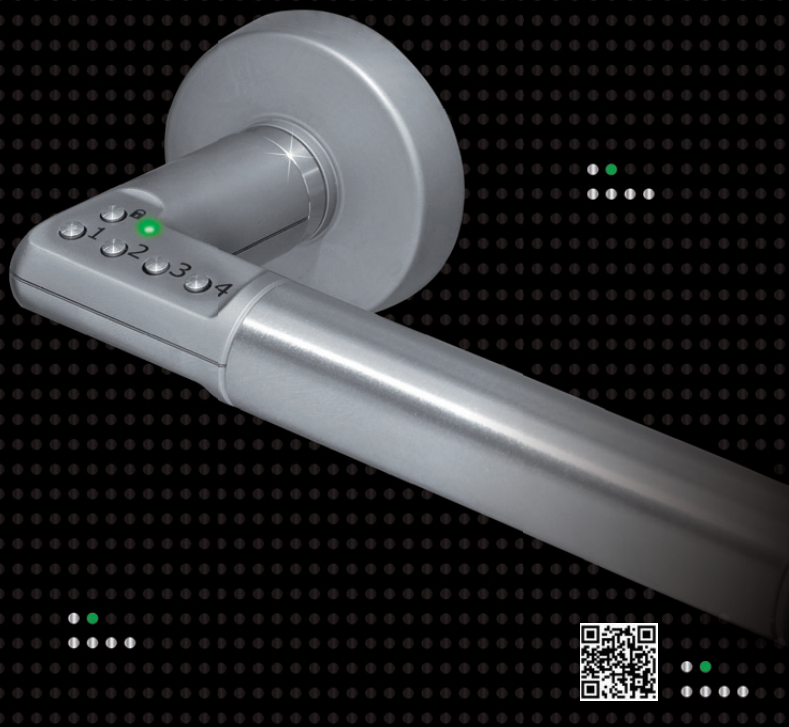
Leading off the South Campus expansion, Maltzan will design the reuse of an existing post office mail distribution center at 870 South Raymond Avenue, adjacent to Daly Genik's adaptation of an existing wind tunnel facility, which was completed for the school in 2004. The program for the poured concrete postal building has not been finalized, but it's likely that the 35,000-square-foot space, which sits on a 2.5-acre lot, will be a center for fabrication and prototyping.

The post office property is expected to be ready for classes by fall 2013, but a final budget and timeline for all the projects has not yet been finalized, said school president Lorne Buchman. Art Center will pay for much of the work with proceeds from a recent bond issue, and will be launching a major capital campaign to pay off that debt. Nearly \$5 million of the \$7 million cost to purchase the post office building came from alumni donations, added Buchman.

Buchman was sure to add that "whatever we do building-wise is serving the school's educational mission." Buchman's predecessor Richard Koshalek was reportedly pushed out after factions within the school felt he was focusing more on architecture than on education. Koshalek hired Frank Gehry to design a \$45 million design research complex on the hillside campus until that plan was scratched in 2009. That plan had originally called for a number of new buildings by Gehry and Álvaro Siza, but was scaled down, before it was cancelled following student protest. **SL**

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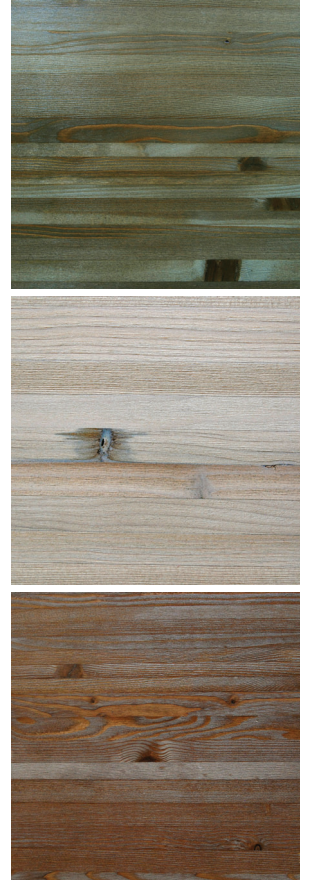
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6



5

COURTESY RESPECTIVE MANUFACTURERS

WOOD STOCK

CORK, BAMBOO, AND LUMBER TAKE NEW SHAPES BUT HAVE THE SAME SUSTAINABLE STAYING POWER. JENNIFER K. GORSCHÉ

1 ÉLITIS NATURE PRÉCIEUSE

The new Nature Précieuse line from Élitis combines tried-and-true wall-covering manufacturing processes with new materials like straw, horsehair, cork, and bamboo. Pictured are woven bamboo and stainless-steel wire on a paper base (RM 635 04) (top) and 100 percent cork on paper base in white (RM 631 94) (bottom). Available in the United States through Donghia. www.elitis.fr/en/home.php

2 PUF STRING CORQUE DESIGN

Portuguese design studio Corque Design debuted its line of eco-friendly furniture and home accessories in New York last fall. New items designed by co-founder Ana Mestre include the Puf String, a seat constructed of rubber cork. The natural composite is cut from industrial rolls, allowing the seat to be constructed with a continuous piece, greatly reducing manufacturing waste. www.corquedesign.com

3 STEPPING WOOD GRAIN CHAIR THINK FABRICATE

Co-founded by Susan Doban and Jason Gorsline as a multidisciplinary design studio affiliated with Doban Architecture, Think Fabricate has introduced the Stepping Wood Grain Chair. Curved corner pieces of solid walnut are joined by bamboo plywood and walnut boards of varying widths. End caps are lacquered MDF with or without storage cutouts. Corresponding ottomans are also available. www.thinkfabricate.com

4 WINDFALL KIREI

In partnership with reclaimed lumber company Windfall Lumber, Kirei now offers a line of engineered panels made with reclaimed materials. Manufactured locally with wood from deconstructed buildings in the Pacific Northwest, the panels are ideal for any surface in commercial and residential design. Panels are available in unfinished, clear, leather, and (shown, top to bottom) anthracite, ivory, mocha. www.kireiusa.com

5 ECOCLAD XP KLIPTech

KlipTech has added two new recycled paper and bamboo-fiber cladding products to its EcoClad line. The new EcoClad XP exterior cladding is available in 600 different finishes, patterns, and textures, in addition to custom-printing with any image; EcoClad Raw is unfinished cladding that can be painted by the client. www.kliptech.com

6 OSSO CHAIR MATTIAZZI

Designed by Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec for Mattiazzi, the Osso chair is made of oak, maple, or ash sourced near the company's factory in Udine, Italy. Manufactured with solar-powered CNC equipment, the chair's precise joinery creates a structure as smooth as bone—osso in Italian. The collection includes an armchair and stools in a range of colors. Available in the United States through Herman Miller. www.mattiazzi.eu



SCOTT MAYORAL

REUSE RENAISSANCE

Downtown LA's retro-chic makeovers show how retail and restaurants can transform a neighborhood. **By Marissa Gluck**



In Downtown Los Angeles, everything old is new again. After more than a decade of redevelopment, spurred largely by the 1999 Adaptive Reuse Ordinance, which created thousands of new residential units by making it easier and cheaper to convert rundown offices into housing, the neighborhood is entering another phase of development. This time, the makeovers are focused on restaurants and retail.

According to the Downtown Center Business Improvement District, the community has more than doubled from about 18,000 residents prior to the ordinance to 46,400 in 2011. Likewise, since 2008 over 400 new restaurant and

retail shops have opened in Downtown LA, with another 50 expected to open this year. With an abundance of largely intact historical buildings, architects and designers have paid homage to the past by restoring or re-creating many of classic features while adding a modern sensibility.

The most anticipated retail project is the renovation of the legendary Clifton's Cafeteria on South Broadway and 7th Street by Kelly Architects, who have also designed several restaurants and bars in the area including Seven Grand, Broadway Bar, Public School 612, and The Falls. The renovation, begun last summer, meant the restaurant was closed Mondays and Tuesdays, but

it remained open the rest of the week. The second phase began in the fall with the full renovation expected to be completed in a year and a half.

Clifton's multi-phased renovation will reinvent some of the themed environments that the cafeteria was originally famous for, such as the "Pacific Seas" and the "Redwood Forest," with plans to invent more. According to owner Andrew Meieran, only 20 percent of the space was utilized prior to his purchase. Last month, the original Beaux Arts brick facade was revealed for the first time in more than 50 years, after being hidden behind aluminum grates. While many of the original windows were filled in with concrete blocks, Meieran and Kelly Architects plan to remove them once seismic upgrades are completed.

Above: SO/DA's UMAMlcatessen, transforms the first floor of a historic building on Broadway with salvaged woods, exposed metals, and dramatic lighting.

Left: UMAMlcatessen brings activity to the street level, while the rest of the building's beautiful art deco facade remains untouched and intact.



COURTESY KELLY ARCHITECTS

turned-apartment in the historic Old Bank District that will include a jazz club and a restaurant; and Kitchen Faire, a new cafe on 6th and Olive streets. Another new favorite nearby is the splendidly simple Băco Mercat on Main Street, which transformed an ordinary cafe by reorganizing with more open space.

Word of change is spreading and attracting new investors. The owners of the Seattle-based Ace Hotel chain have announced they're opening their latest boutique hotel in the United Artists building on South Broadway and 9th Street. The 13-story 1927 Spanish-Gothic styled building was originally designed by the firm Walker & Eisen and contains a 2,214-seat Spanish Gothic theater. The hotel proprietors, working with LA-based Killefer Flammang Architects, are rumored to be renovating the theater as well as the building.

The bones of old buildings may be solid, but opening businesses in historic buildings still presents myriad challenges to restaurant and retail owners.

"[Owners] need to have a special commitment to opening a place Downtown," said designer Ricki Kline, who is responsible for early Downtown pioneer Cedd Moses' empire of restaurants and bars in historic buildings, including Seven Grand, a former jewelry store-turned-deco-style whiskey bar; Cole's, a restaurant that once served as the main terminal

for the Pacific Electric railway; speakeasy-style Varnish; and tequila bar Las Perlas. "It's very complex, time-consuming, and expensive. You have to want to be downtown as a personal aesthetic choice," added Kline.

Adapting downtown's ground-floor spaces to restaurant and retail uses requires that owners upgrade to modern building codes, including meeting ADA standards for accessible design. While owners often need to install new fire/life safety measures and upgraded power and plumbing systems, restaurants often face the additional challenges of adding expensive exhaust systems to ventilate their kitchens. According to Meieran, owners often meet with unexpected challenges as they begin renovations. "You don't know what you're going to find," he said.

Architects and owners must also navigate a farrago of city departments for permits and approvals, often causing delays and cost overruns. According to Kelly Architects principal George Kelly, the Edison, a cavernous ode to early 20th-century industrialism in the sub-basement of the Higgins Building, required twenty different department clearances in order to open. "Any one of them could shut it down," he said.

Below: Ricki Kline's Las Perlas is inspired not only by vintage LA, but by the colors and designs of Oaxaca, Mexico.



COURTESY KELLY ARCHITECTS

Above: Kelly Architects' Public School gastropub mixes old-school elements like white tile and classic stools with modern fixtures and accents.

Left: Kelly's Broadway Bar sports elegant chandeliers and ornate prints that give it the feel of a 1940s supper club.

Besides refreshing classics like Clifton's, the area has seen new restaurants settling into repositioned buildings, such as UMAMicatessen, downtown design firm SO/DA's multi-concept eatery and bar inside a 1929 art deco building next to the Orpheum Theatre on Broadway. The restaurant has been brought to life with hovering aluminum honeycomb panels, wall-mounted wine barrels, exposed ducts, and reclaimed-timber bar, tabletops, and siding. "People appreciate this kind of work so much more than generic spaces they see every day," said SO/DA's Derrick Flynn, of Downtown's adaptive reuse resurgence, as he calls it. The firm is also working on a makeover of the Winston, a financial building-



COURTESY RICKI KLINE



Left: After removing its clunky aluminum screen Kelly revealed Clifton's original red brick facade.

Below: Before the renovation, Clifton carried a non descript aluminum facade.



Below: Kline's Seven Grand features wood walls mounted with—why not?—stag heads.



COURTESY RICKI KLINE

Yet some architects have noticed that the approval process is not as cumbersome as it once was. "The city has become more of a partner," said Kline. "The faster they turn around [approvals], the faster they can collect taxes."

In spite of the obstacles, new projects are announced with increasing frequency. Broadway specifically is experiencing an influx of new retail vendors. Long a destination for Latin American shoppers, the recession increased the number of ground-floor vacancies in the area that are now being snapped up. Jewelry designer Tarina Tarantino has announced plans to transform 908 South Broadway into the Sparkle Factory, a multi-floor, multi-use space that will not only serve as design headquarters for the eponymously named company but will also house an art gallery, production studio, and jewelry boutique. Meyer & Holler, who are also responsible for Hollywood's Egyptian Theatre and Grauman's Chinese Theatre, originally designed the 1920 building.

These projects, as well as several more in the vicinity such as the upcoming Two Boots Pizza and Figaro Bistro, may soon change the experience of Broadway's streetscape, particularly at night when the street can feel sketchy. Figaro's new space on South Broadway is the

former Schaber Cafeteria, designed by Charles F. Plummer in 1928, but severely damaged in the 1992 riots. Interior designer Bertrand Genoist of Black Door Development plans to restore the original marquee, while designing an ode to classic 1930s French design inside.

And while the thoroughfare is often bustling during the day, it can be desolate at night. A plan to reintroduce the streetcar to Broadway would help activate the street and make it more pedestrian friendly at all hours. It's a welcome change, according to LA Conservancy executive director Linda Dishman. "There wasn't a lot going on after 'Last Remaining Seats,'" said Dishman of the Conservancy's summer movie program in historic theaters. "You could practically lie down in the middle of Broadway. There was no traffic or people there."

According to Jessica Wethington McLean, executive director of Bringing Back Broadway, a public-private initiative to revitalize the street, there is still work to be done, particularly on the upper floors of these buildings. "Commercial use is critically important for the district," said Wethington McLean. "Ground-floor retail is supported by the upper floors." While local residents and visitors sustain many of these businesses, Wethington McLean believes the neighborhood still

needs to attract office tenants to provide the "captive audience" these businesses require to thrive. Bringing Back Broadway offers incentives such as three years of tax exemption for new businesses and employer hiring credits that should help.

Change is happening Downtown, and the place is regaining some of its past glamour. However, the demise of the Community Redevelopment Agency, with its public investment incentives, may have dealt a blow to the area's full recovery. With the economy recovering, albeit slowly, and demand mounting for the kind of singular experience offered by adaptive reuse projects, the resurrection of these gorgeous art deco, Beaux Arts and modernist buildings looks to continue. And the first places that new visitors will invariably go to form an impression will be these smartly transformed restaurants and retail.

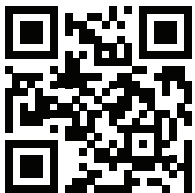
LA-BASED MARISSA GLUCK IS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO AN.

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MARCH

WEDNESDAY 28

LECTURE

Nicholas de Monchaux
Fashioning Apollo7:00 p.m.
W. M. Keck Lecture Hall
SCI-Arc
960 East 3rd St., Los Angeles
sciarc.edu

FRIDAY 30

LECTURE

Andrew Atwood
Atwood-A7:00 p.m.
W. M. Keck Lecture Hall
SCI-Arc
960 East 3rd St.
Los Angeles
sciarc.edu

SATURDAY 31

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

The Utopian Impulse:
Buckminster Fuller
and the Bay Area
The Schwab Room
San Francisco Museum of
Modern Art
151 3rd St.
San Francisco
sfmoma.org

Parra

Weirded Out

San Francisco Museum
of Modern Art
151 3rd St.
San Francisco
sfmoma.org

APRIL

TUESDAY 3

EXHIBITION OPENING

Portraits of Renown:
Photography and the Cult of
CelebrityWest Pavilion
Plaza Level
J. Paul Getty Museum
1200 Getty Center Dr.
Los Angeles
getty.edu

WEDNESDAY 4

LECTURES

Dan Pitera
CED Lecture Series6:30 p.m.
College of Environmental
Design
University of California,
Berkeley
230 Wurster Hall
Berkeley, CA
arch.ced.berkeley.edu

Alex McDowell

Building Worlds—Terraforming
the Narrative Space7:00 p.m.
W. M. Keck Lecture Hall
SCI-Arc
960 East 3rd St., Los Angeles
sciarc.edu

Matt Heberger

Managing Groundwater as
If the Environment Mattered1:00 p.m.
230 Wurster Hall
College of
Environmental Design
UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA
arch.ced.berkeley.edu

Edward Mazria

The Next Built
Environment Today6:00 p.m.
Seeley G. Mudd Hall
USC School of Architecture
Los Angeles
arch.usc.edu

THURSDAY 5

EVENT

Pedro E. Guerrero:
A Retrospective**Opening and Artist Talk**
6:00 p.m.
WUHO Gallery
6518 Hollywood Blvd.
Los Angeles
woodbury.edu

FRIDAY 6

LECTURE

Jean-Pierre Chupin, PhD
On the Analogical Core of
Architectural Thinking4:00 p.m.
Business Rotunda,
Architecture Department
California Polytechnic State
University
San Luis Obispo, CA
arch.calpoly.edu

EVENT

Gallery Exhibition Discussion
Peter Cook + Eric Owen Moss7:00 p.m.
W. M. Keck Lecture Hall
SCI-Arc
960 East 3rd St., Los Angeles
sciarc.edu

WEDNESDAY 11

LECTURE

Hanif Kara
Binding Architecture and
Engineering Today6:00 p.m.
Harris Hall
USC School of Architecture
Los Angeles
arch.usc.edu

EXHIBITION OPENING

Daido Moriyama
FractureJapanese Pavilion
LA County Museum of Art
5905 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles
lacma.org

THURSDAY 12

LECTURES

Culture Fix: Hitoshi Abe12:00 p.m.
Exhibition Gallery
Fowler Museum at UCLA
308 Charles E. Young Dr.
North,
Los Angeles
fowler.ucla.edu

Tatiana Bilbao

Tatiana Bilbao S.C.6:30 p.m.
Ahmanson Main Space
Woodbury University School
of Architecture
2212 Main St., San Diego, CA
woodbury.edu

FRIDAY 13

LECTURES

Sarah McPhee
Bernini's Beloved: A Portrait
of Costanza Piccolomini5:30 p.m.
Lower Level
Hamilton Building
Denver Art Museum
100 West 14th Ave. Pkwy.
Denver, CO
denverartmuseum.org

Andrew Fahlund

The Bathtub and
the Hair Dryer1:00 p.m.
230 Wurster Hall
College of
Environmental Design
UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA
arch.ced.berkeley.edu

EVENT

SCI-Arc Robot House
Fellows: where We are1:00 p.m.
W. M. Keck Lecture Hall
SCI-Arc
960 East 3rd St., Los Angeles
sciarc.edu

SATURDAY 14

EXHIBITION OPENING

Sandro Cinto**Encontro das Águas**PACCAR Pavilion
Olympic Sculpture Park
The Seattle Art Museum
2901 Western Ave.
Seattle, WA
seattleartmuseum.org

TUESDAY 17

LECTURE

Jeanne Gang
Studio Gang Architects6:30 p.m.
Fletcher Jones Auditorium
Woodbury University School
of Architecture
7500 Glenoaks Blvd.
Burbank, CA
woodbury.edu

WEDNESDAY 18

LECTURES

Elizabeth Diller
CED Lecture Series6:30 p.m.
2050 Life Sciences Building
College of Environmental
Design
University of
California, Berkeley
Berkeley, CA
arch.ced.berkeley.edu

Xu Weiguo

Dynamic Response
XWG works6:00 p.m.
Gin D. Wong, FAIA
Conference Center
Harris Hall
USC School of Architecture
Los Angeles
arch.usc.edu

THURSDAY 19

EXHIBITION OPENING

California College of the Arts
On ApologyUpper and Lower Galleries
The Wattis Institute for
Contemporary Arts
1111 8th St.
San Francisco
wattis.org

FRIDAY 20

LECTURE

Tridib Benerjee and Anastasia
Loukaitou-Sideris**Hearst Lecture**
4:00 p.m.
Business Rotunda,
Architecture Department
California Polytechnic State
University
San Luis Obispo, CA
arch.calpoly.edu

SATURDAY 21

LECTURE

Catherine Herbst
The Power of 1009:30 a.m.
NewSchool of
Architecture & Design
1249 F St.
San Diego, CA
friendsofsdarch.com

ROBERT ADAMS/LACMA

ROBERT ADAMS: THE PLACE WE LIVE

Los Angeles County Museum of Art
5905 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles
Through June 3

In his 45 years photographing the American West, Robert Adams has documented the evolution of landscape and our relationship to it. In response to the rapid development of his surroundings in Colorado Springs and Denver, Adams began photographing a landscape marked by tract housing, highways, and gas stations. His photographs, Adams says, "document a separation from ourselves, and in turn from the natural world that we professed to love." Nearly 300 prints showcase Adams' career, from his early shots of Colorado's desolate terrain to his recent works documenting migrating birds in the Pacific Northwest, with special focus on his portrayal of the Los Angeles region.



PEDRO GUERRERO/ WOODBURY

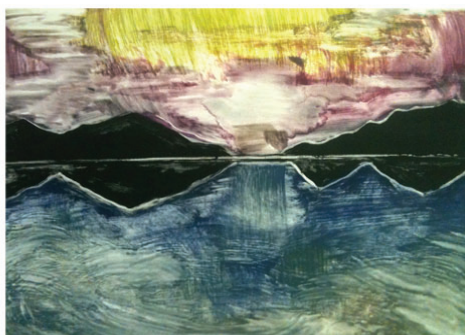
PEDRO E. GUERRERO: A RETROSPECTIVE

WUHO Gallery
6518 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles
Opening April 5

At age 22, Pedro E. Guerrero made a spontaneous visit to Taliesin West to meet Frank Lloyd Wright; upon seeing his portfolio Wright immediately gave Guerrero the position of principal photographer. Guerrero's relationship with Wright would define his career; nearly all publications about Wright include his work. Moving to New York, Guerrero went on to work for journals including *Architectural Record* and *Vogue*, documenting the works of modernists like Saarinen and Breuer. His photography approaches architecture as sculpture, displaying an eye for composition and form that led to close personal and working relationships with Alexander Calder and Louise Nevelson.

Esto
www.esto.com

The 1959 AMS Headquarters in Ohio includes an extraordinary double-dome by Buckminster Fuller. Recently renovated by The Chesler Group, the project has been photographed by Jeff Goldberg.
Photo © Jeff Goldberg/Esto



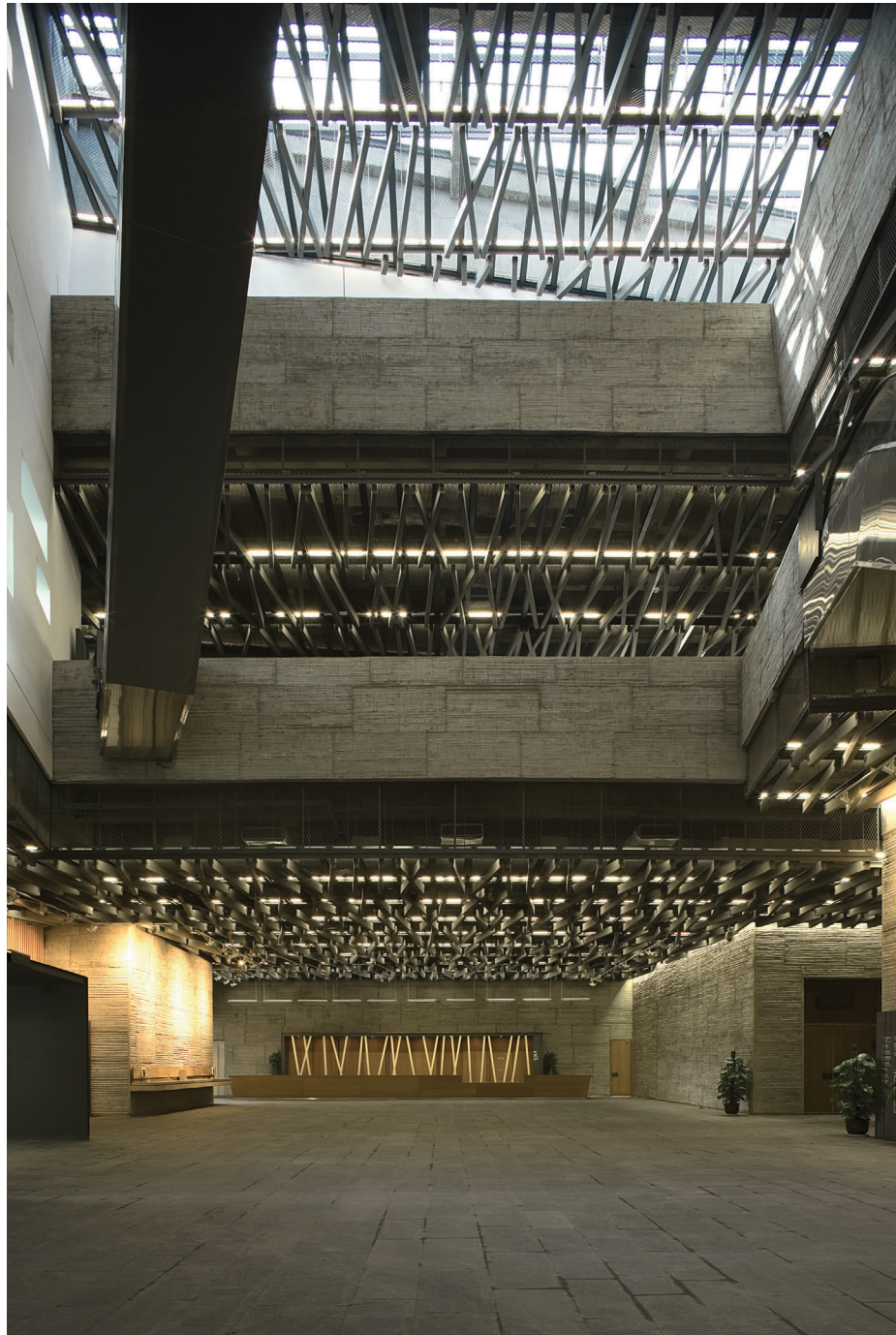
Deborah Freedman Good Night Irene 5

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February 2 - 27, 2012

Reception: February 9 6:00-8:00pm

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LY HENGZHONG

Left: Interior of the Ningbo History Museum, Ningbo, China; above: exterior of the museum made from reclaimed rubble; on page one: the Five Scattered Houses, also in Ningbo.

with workers, questioning materials together with them. I did a lot of renovation work for old buildings. It was a rich experience, because any time you design something in this field, it's important to see that there are some things that have existed before you. It's not just designing on an empty piece of paper or on an empty site. You have to wonder how you can create something that takes the past and turns it into the future.

When you do a renovation for a building you have to touch the materials. It's not just the materials, but it's the way the materials change with time, the weather, or with people's lives. You have to design new things that can coexist. So now when I design a new building, even on an empty site, my way is very similar to a renovation.

An important aspect of your work is the emphasis on authenticity, recycled materials, and craft. Can you talk about those interests of yours in relationship to the slick mass-produced high-rise construction in the China today?

Usually I like to talk about real things and realities. I prefer to talk about natural materials that aren't artificial. It's not just about an interest in recycled materials. But if you think you are a modern architect or a contemporary architect you should be critiquing reality. Maybe in the next ten years I'll use other kinds of materials. But in the past ten years, I felt there was too much demolition and I wanted to propose an answer to that. Of course this is about attitude. On the other side, using this material has led to an architectural way—the craftsman's skills.

Is this a critique of the state of architecture in China?

Yes. In China I think architecture is important because in modern times it plays a big role. Architects design so many buildings at such a large scale. The size means that it can totally change people's lifestyles. Who gave you this power? How do you think about how you can control and handle this power? What is the meaning to you? Those are very important things. If you just think that you are an engineer and you're going to create a surface for people without thinking about how the surface can change people's lives, it could really destroy their lives.

Only once did I design a high-rise building. I wanted to approach the design as a high-rise building that used many small buildings collected together.

You're talking about the Vertical Courtyard Project in Hangzhou?

Yes. It's a simple idea. I wanted even those people living 100 feet high to still feel as if they were living in a small house where they could live around a small courtyard and plant their own trees. From below they can tell people on the ground that "those are my trees and that's my house." It provides an identity for people to feel as if it's their own house. It's more than just blank windows in apartment buildings that can't separate neighborhoods. It's a basic right for people.

Your design process seems similar to Chinese landscape painting. For example, when you drew the Xiangshan Campus in Hangzhou, you drew the project all at once. Is this a typical approach?

It's not just an abstract concept to talk about the countryside. In fact the countryside includes many things for me. I spent a long time researching traditional landscape painting. It means that you can control a large-scale landscape in a spatial way. The Hangzhou campus was my test project. It was very successful, but for another project, there may be another way to do it. Every time I like performing different experiments.

It's not enough to say that I have a good education and I know how to design. You should talk about it not as designing something, but instead asking, "How should I design?" It's a more basic question. How do you ask the question? The way is more important than the design itself. It's my way, and it's very simple.

What does the Pritzker Prize mean for you and for architects in China?

Especially for young architects, this prize encourages them to do more experimental work—because the fact is, it's not easy. In China we have many projects, but only a few good projects. Good architecture is not just design, but I think it's closer to a struggle. It'll give them more self-confidence.

For me, it has another importance. Originally, I wanted to stop for two years, to have time with my wife and time to raise our son together. I worked too much over the past ten years. My son is 10 years old now, but now with the prize, maybe this means I have to do more things and more design. But I still want to spend more time with my son.

If you keep the feeling in your heart pure, people will like your building. If you really do good design, you will find that your building will smile. Because the building comes from your heart, and it really gets a good feeling from life, and people can feel it. If you just work hard, and worry because you want a good building, people can feel that the building is a little nervous. So it's very important to keep your heart in the right way.

JONATHAN LOUIE IS AN ARCHITECT AND CURATOR IN LOS ANGELES.

BUILDING WITH HEART AND HAND

AN contributor Jonathan Louie talks to the 2012 Pritzker laureate Wang Shu about regionalism, fame and architecture in the world's newest superpower.

LA few hours before he was officially announced the 2012 Pritzker Architecture Prize laureate and the first China-based architect to be so acknowledged, Wang Shu, 48, was just another architect professor on the schedule to give a lecture to the department of architecture and urban design at UCLA. Describing himself as an artist as well as an architect, Shu sat down with *AN* contributor **Jonathan Louie** to discuss his "way" of design.

Wang Shu lives and practices in Hangzhou, China, where he established Amateur Architecture Studio with his wife Lu Wenyu in 1997. In contrast to the globe-trotting Chinese "avant-garde," Wang Shu explores the rich legacy of China's intellectual, sculptural, and architectural history, and ties his research closely to a simple formal language that emphasizes regional culture and astonishingly beautiful but imperfect craftsmanship.

The Architect's Newspaper: As an architect you've cast yourself as someone who prefers to practice in the region in which you live. Was there a turning point or event in your

career that influenced that decision and your perception of architecture?

Wang Shu: For Chinese architects, the question is, how can we make a Chinese modern architecture? Not just a modern architecture, but China's modern architecture. It's an interesting question, because we do have a Chinese architecture. It's a learned and copied modern architecture from the Western world, but there is no relation to our local life.

In school, I did some independent work very early on. For example, as a student, I worked on my first building, which was finished in 1985, and I designed my first independent project in 1989 [a youth center for a small town in Hainang]. In this way, I received professional architectural experience. Although I could do good architecture, it wasn't really what I wanted. I realized that it's not just about good architecture but about the best way to design and to construct. It was a more basic question.

So the 1990s were a very important time. It was a turning point. I completely took myself out of the professional system and took time



ARTHUR LONERGAN

Rendering of Cliff May Homes, 1956

and design.

The evidence here shows that May, despite his heretical historicism, should be considered alongside stalwarts like Richard Neutra, Rudolph M. Schindler, and Pierre Koenig as a major practitioner of California design.

Drawn almost entirely from the museum's own collection, the evidence is broad and deep, thanks largely to the far-sighted acquisitions of former museum director David Gebhard. Long before California's historicist, moderne, or even modernist architects were considered significant, Gebhard was amassing a tremendous collection.

Was May the father of the ranch house? No. The exhibit shows that May's work continues California architects' ongoing adaptation of vernacular and historicist architecture since the turn of the century. We get to compare May's early work (beginning around 1930) with earlier work by George Washington Smith, Arthur B. Benton, Myron Hunt, Irving J. Gill, Carleton Winslow, Sr., and others. May's work emerges quite naturally. His work is also held up to that of his contemporaries in the 1930s and 1940s, when it seems that every California architect worth his or her salt could design a decent ranch. We see the evidence in designs by Roland Coate, Edla Muir, John Byers, Lulah Maria Riggs, Paul László, H. Roy Kelley, Albert Frey, and others. The only major figure not

represented is William Wurster, the Northern Californian.

These examples are custom homes that define and refine the ranch house we know today: usually one story, casually asymmetrical in design, open in plan, nestled into hills and groves, with board-and-batten or stucco walls and shingled roofs. While the exhibit challenges the notion that midcentury modernism was only about steel and glass boxes, May's ranch house, though rooted in historical references, was also clearly modern. Over the decades his designs became more abstract; for example, windows turned into aluminum sliders.

Thoroughly modern was May's skillful use of the levers of mass media (especially *House Beautiful* and *Sunset* magazine) to popularize the ranch—a role he played better than anyone. He must be considered as formidable a propagandist in defining and disseminating modern design concepts as Frank Lloyd Wright or Le Corbusier.

His designs met his clients' desires to live in close contact with nature by opening entire walls to the patios and making patios true outdoor rooms for socializing or private relaxation. Formal dining rooms disappeared as open, multi-use family rooms grew.

But the crowning proof of May's modernist credibility is his success, with partner Chris Choate, in achieving the Holy Grail of modernism: a buildable and successful low-cost, prefabricated

house. May and Choate's low-cost houses drew on modern design, fabrication, and mass production. They deserve full recognition alongside those of builder Joseph Eichler and architects Palmer & Krisel in applying modular and prefabricated elements to reduce cost and enhance design.

Astonishingly, May and Choate's tract houses retain the architectural essence of his large, sprawling custom homes. The exhibit presents a series of drawings from 1946 that reveal May's thinking: one shows the large, splay-winged designs he perfected to grab light, views, and outdoor space in his custom homes on large lots. Then he boils down the essence of those spacious homes into a truly affordable size (as small as 900 square feet) on the tiny, cheek-by-jowl lots of a housing tract. Nonetheless, the homes retain the connection to nature, the usable outdoor rooms. His solutions are nothing short of pure architecture. Perhaps only May, with his mastery of expansive custom homes as seen earlier in the exhibit, could have accomplished this so effectively.

May's work clearly challenges the narrow notion that modernism and history are irreconcilable. His use of historical, regional imagery in place of machine portrayals seems not so much *derrière-garde* as fully in sync with a diverse, modern world of movies, television, and jet travel.

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RANCH DRESSING

Carefree California: Cliff May and the Romance of the Ranch House
Art, Design & Architecture Museum, UC Santa Barbara
Through June 17

Critics have no idea what to do with architect Cliff May. He's hard to fit into any of the usual midcentury modern categories. He's often called the father of the ranch house, but many critics don't think ranches are modern. He designed hundreds of houses, but he was never a licensed architect—he never even trained as an architect. While most midcentury modern architects wore their techno-modernism on their sleeves, May felt no such need. As *House Beautiful* editor Elizabeth Gordon once put it, his architecture

was "modern without looking it."

A retrospective of May's career, *Carefree California: Cliff May and the Romance of the Ranch House*, is showing at the Art, Design & Architecture Museum at UC Santa Barbara. The exhibition, co-curated by museum curator Jocelyn Gibbs and historian Nicholas Olsberg, with a catalog coming in May, lives up to the Pacific Standard Time initiative's promise to bring us fresh scholarship so that we can reassess the extraordinary midcentury flowering of California art



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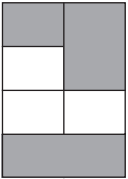
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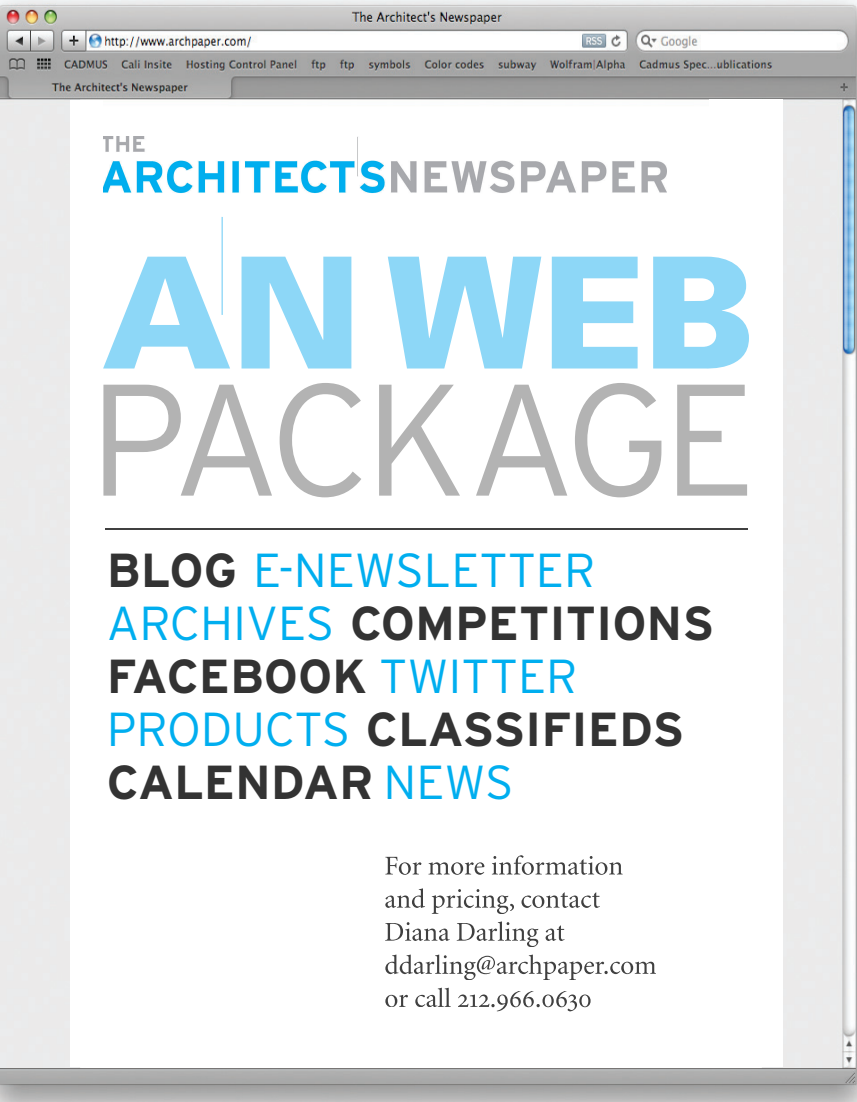
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